<Book Reviews>Christopher Goscha. The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam. London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2016.

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ethnicity-based policies, these communities would be the same as we see them today. Would they still yearn to belong, and if so, what would they want to belong to?

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The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam

Christopher Goscha

London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2016.

The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam by Christopher Goscha traces the story of modern Vietnamese nationbuilding back thousands of years. The titles of its 14 chapters cover in chronological order events that are commonly seen as milestones in the forming of modern Vietnam: Chinese invasion (Chapter 1, "Northern Configurations"), French colonization (Chapter 2, "A Divided House and a French Imperial Meridian Line?"; Chapter 3, "Altered States"; Chapter 4, "Rethinking Vietnam"; Chapter 5, "The Failure of Colonial Republicanism"; and Chapter 6, "Colonial Society and Economy"), the First Indochina War (Chapter 7, "Contesting Empires and Nation-states"; Chapter 8, "States of War"; and Chapter 9, "Internationalized States of War"), the Vietnam War (Chapter 10, "A Tale of Two Republics"; and Chapter 11, "Towards One Vietnam"), and stories of a unified Vietnam (Chapter 12, "Cultural Change in the Long Twentieth Century"; Chapter 13, "The Tragedy and the Rise of Modern Vietnam"; and Chapter 14, "Vietnam from Beyond the Red River"). Nevertheless, amidst a wide range of scholarship about the history of modern Vietnam, Goscha's *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam* is unique in constantly stressing on the multiplicity of modern Vietnam's past. Thus, it implicitly criticizes contemporary scholarship on Vietnamese history that has been produced under postcolonial theory and criticism by foreign scholars and under nationalist historiography by Communist Vietnamese historians.

Throughout the book Goscha uses synonyms for the word "multiplicity," such as "plurality," "diversity," and "heterogeneity," typical terms of postmodern literature, to highlight his vision of "multiple Vietnams." Moreover, the author explicitly states in "Introduction: The Many Different Vietnams" that "rather than positing one Vietnam, one homogenous people, one history, one modernity, or even one colonialism, this book investigates modern Vietnam's past through its multiple forms and impressive diversity" (p. xxx). Accordingly, as presented in the book, the history of Vietnam includes a series of interlocking forces and people; they occurred and acted at specific points in time and space, each generating its own range of possibilities and eliminating others at the same time. As evidence, the author begins his story of Vietnam's past with "a mosaic of a hundred Vietnams" in the open zone running between present-day central Vietnam and South-

ern China, where diverse people, routes, and ideas intersected. For thousands of years, as Goscha describes, people arrived in the low-lying Red River basin via the eastern coast and overland; Austroasiatic peoples also arrived in this area by way of Southern China; and the Dong Son civilization, home to vibrantand diverse peoples and cultures, was constantly in rivalry and fragmentation.

Emphasizing pluralism in writing Vietnamese history, the book differentiates itself from existing scholarship about modern Vietnam, which exclusively celebrates the Vietnam of Ho Chi Minh—Vietnam as winner, as Ho Chi Minh, or in general as a Communist nation-state—and Vietnam of Western colonialism—modern Vietnam as the product of only Western colonialism. Instead, the history of Vietnam written by Goscha is derived from the perspectives of the "others" that are largely silenced in official Vietnamese historiography. Goscha calls these perspectives "thoughts of alternatives," which are the perspectives of competitor states and their leaders, with whom Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam had to engage and won over. These others, as shown in the first three pre-1858 chapters, include non-Viet peoples; and, as shown in the following five post-1858 chapters, include French Vietnam administered by different French colonialists, the Associated State of Vietnam led by Ngo Dinh Diem, the Republic of Vietnam forged by different presidents, and highland Vietnams managed by different men. Goscha believes that these alternative polities help to understand present-day Vietnam. This present-day Vietnam is characterized by Communist leaders authorizing a capitalist economy and inclusive nationalism since their official adoption of Reform policy, while ceaselessly maintaining the legitimacy of the single Party in "a post-communist world" through school texts, official histories, museums, billboards, and the media (pp. 484–485). Therefore, Goscha's book definitely provides audiences in Vietnam with a new story of modern Vietnam in which voices of "the others" or the "alternatives" are counted as integral forces, a story that is different from the one written by Party historians.

Goscha's history of modern Vietnam is groundbreaking also with its approach that goes beyond the Franco-centered one: Goscha affirms that today's Vietnam is not only a product of French colonization but also of pre-French Asian empires' expansions, and even of its own colonial history. In other words, understanding the modern Vietnams, according to Goscha, means recognizing that they have been constructed through the intersections of imperial projects of the Chinese, French, Vietnamese, Russians, and Americans. Accordingly, modern Vietnam started with the brief "Chinese colonization" in the early fifteenth century when the Ming created "gunpowder empires" and brought new forms of modernity, statecraft, and violence to the region while imposing direct political rule and cultural assimilation. Goscha's belief in the plurality of modern Vietnam is evident also in his telling stories of reform-minded Vietnamese mandarins following models of economic, political, and scientific modernization from Japan and China for their nationalist projects. For Goscha, even during the French colonial period, French and European expansion was not the only source for creating a modern Vietnam; Asian connections were.

Interestingly, the way that Goscha tells stories about the pre-existing "Asian colonization" of "Vietnam" seems to echo historiographies of French-colonized Vietnam written by postcolonial scholars. In other words, Goscha's stories about colonization and decolonization, regardless of time and space, follow similar directions: colonialists culturally, politically, and economically dominate their subjects with armed forces and cultural assimilation; in response, local elites maintain an anticolonial stance regardless of their ambiguous choice between resistance and colonial collaboration.When telling stories of Chinese colonization, Goscha uses terms and ideas that accord with those appearing in postcolonial analyses of French colonization. Reading chapters in which the author describes Chinese rule spreading aspects of Han culture into Jiaozhi, audiences would easily be reminded of accounts of the French colonialization of Vietnam in works by postcolonialist scholars such as David Marr, Nicola A. Cooper, and Gail Kelly. For example, Goscha tells the reader that the Ming conquest of Dai Viet was undertaken with brutal military force, modern weapon technologies, and discourses of natives as "barbarians"; in response, a certain segment of the Dai Viet elite joined the empire while other stook up arms to gain independence. Many Sinicized elites resisted the Chinese imperial expansion, but they also wanted to build a better life within the empire. These descriptions of Sinicized native elites during the Chinese colonization sound similar to accounts of politically, culturally, and economically ambiguous French-educated Vietnamese intellectuals in postcolonial works about Vietnam such as *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945* by David Marr and *The Birth of Vietnamese Political Journalism: Saigon, 1916–1930* by Philippe Peycam.

Noticeably, Goscha points out, native leaders of pre-French Vietnam built a postcolonial Dai Viet based on the Chinese legacy of culture, military, civil service, and bureaucracy. As described, the Ming empire destroyed native intellectuality and culture but also modernized Dai Viet by introducing the Confucian canon, print technology, paper, a legal code, and notions of statecraft. While native leaders successfully repulsed Chinese colonization, they also took the colonizer's Confucian culture, technology, statecraft, and economy as models in their postcolonial state-building: Le Loi and his successors promoted Confucian statecraft through the construction of more schools and academic institutions, the acceleration of the civil service examination program, and the promulgation of a law code with Confucian characteristics. This way of constructing postcolonial Dai Viet is similar to the way that leaders of the two republican Vietnams and the unified Vietnam, as Goscha describes in Chapters 10 and 11, built their postcolonial states. According to this view, the modernity of present-day Vietnam has multiple forms that were created at different points in time and space by multiple colonial forces; these forms "often blend with and build upon pre-existing ones" (pp. xxxiv); modernity coexists with the "pre-modern." This approach argues against postcolonial scholarship about Vietnam, such as *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters* by Nicola Cooper, *Indochina: An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858–1954* by Pierre Brocheux and Daniel Hémery, and *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*

by Shawn Frederick McHale. These works implicitly share the idea that the French were the sole force to create the history of modern Vietnam.

Another interesting point in Goscha's story of modern Vietnam is that it is viewed from a comparative world history perspective. According to this view, the modern Vietnams are not historically exceptional; instead, they run parallel and are similar to modernizations of other states in the world. For example, Goscha notes that the process by which Vietnam entered into and extended its participation in the Chinese empire is similar to the way Gaul entered the Roman empire. As such, the "Vietnams" have, at different times and spaces, been products of larger historical processes in the world. In other words, the Vietnams have hardly ever been alone and isolated in the larger dynamic regional and world modernizations: they were either forced to participate in or actively participated in modernizing circles around them. As such, the history of modern Vietnam is part of the histories of the modern world at large.

The comparative world history perspective effectively allows Goscha to view "Vietnams" not as passive victims of foreign forces as commonly seen in existing scholarship about this country. Pre-French Vietnam and post-1975 unified Vietnam, for Goscha, are products of colonial expansion and modernizing forces themselves: Le Thanh Tong and Ming Mang were remarkable colonizers that modernized ethnic communities such as the Cham and Khmer, and unified Vietnam has been a colonizer of many ethnic minorities throughout the country. Goscha's story of the modern Vietnams, including stories of how they were colonized and modernized by others and how they colonized and modernized others is groundbreaking. This groundbreaking position is especially true in the context of most existing scholarship by postcolonialist academics outside Vietnam viewing-modern Vietnam as a passive product of French colonization, and most existing scholarship by nationalist historians within Vietnam emphasizing the modern Vietnam as a victory of the Party's effort. Overall, Goscha's book offers alternative ways of looking into modern Vietnam that go beyond European modernization and Party consolidation.

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